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LETTER DATED 16 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to inform you on behalf of my Government that the armed forces of the United Kingdom - in association with those of the United States of America - took military action in Iraq on 16 December 1998. The action is continuing.

The action was taken following a long history of non-cooperation by Iraq with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). On 31 October 1998, Iraq decided to end all cooperation with the Special Commission. This decision was condemned by the Security Council in its resolution 1205 (1998) of 5 November 1998 as a flagrant violation of resolution 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991, in which the Council laid down the conditions for the ceasefire. Iraq has failed to honour its decision, notified to the Secretary-General in the letters of 14 November 1998 from Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, that it would cooperate fully with the Special Commission and IAEA. The letter from the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission to the Secretary-General dated 15 December 1998 states clearly that Iraq did not provide the full cooperation it promised, and that UNSCOM is unable as a result to conduct the substantive work mandated to it by the Security Council.

The United Kingdom and the United States have acted on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Our objective is compliance by the Iraqi leadership with the obligations laid down by the Council. The operation was undertaken when it became apparent that there was no prospect of this being achieved by peaceful means. It will have the effect of degrading capabilities which have been the subject of Security Council resolutions over the past nine years. Targets have been carefully chosen to avoid civilian casualties.

(Signed) Jeremy GREENSTOCK

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